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EDUCATION WEEK

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Bush Drug Plan: School Policies Required for Aid

President Will Make TV Pitch to Students

By Ellen Flax

WASHINGTON—Pledging to "stop illegal drug use before it starts," President Bush last week unveiled a national strategy for fighting drugs that will require schools to adopt tough anti-drug policies as a prerequisite for receiving any federal funds.

"Every school, every college and university—and every workplace—must adopt tough but fair policies about drug use by students and employees," Mr. Bush said in his nationally televised address on Sept. 5. "Those that will not adopt such policies will not get federal funds. Period."

The $7.9-billion plan, which places an emphasis on law-enforcement measures and on aid to South American countries fighting drug producers, contains few new initiatives for schools.

In addition to requiring that schools adopt tough anti-drug policies and drug-prevention programs, the plan calls on the Education Department to use existing funds to encourage the development of model alternative schools for youths with drug problems.

The drug-education plan—developed by William J. Bennett, the nation's so-called "drug czar" and former Secretary of Education—calls for an increase in federal funding from $355 million this fiscal year to $392 million in the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1. The proposed increase is identical to the amount requested by Mr. Bush in his budget address last February. *(See Education Week, Sept. 6, 1989.)*

In his speech, Mr. Bush also said he "would take the anti-drug message to the classrooms of America in a special television address, one that I hope will reach every school, every young American."

Late last week, a White House spokesman said the President will talk about "drugs, education, and children" in a Sept. 12 address to be broadcast on Cable News Network and CBS at 12:15 P.M.

Politicians and some educators were

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Ray Lustig/The Washington Post

President Bush addresses reporters after announcing his anti-drug strategy.

In Connecticut, Moving Past Pencil and Paper

Teachers Evaluated On Class Behavior

By Ann Bradley

HARTFORD, CONN.—The 55 educators meeting in a plush conference room of the new legislative building here were learning a new language of assessment: the difficult, nuanced description of what goes into effective teaching.

They watched videotapes of young practitioners engaged in the time-honored rituals of the school day—taking attendance, presenting a lesson plan, preparing the class for a trip. And then they tried to rate on an objective scale the widely varying styles and practices they had seen.

For many of these would-be state "assessors," the task was daunting.

"Don't panic if you say 'my common vision isn't your common vision,' " advised Carol Sarabun, a Greenwich elementary principal who was serving as a trainer. "There may be a point where you wonder if you know teaching at all."

The intensive 50-hour training course was designed to equip these and other teaching veterans with the means of sys-

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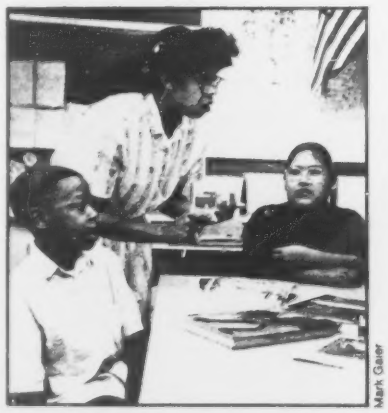

Mark Gaier

New assessments for teachers and students are pioneered in Connecticut.

Student Assessment Rates Performance

By Robert Rothman

In what is being seen as a major step toward lessening schools' reliance on standardized tests to measure achievement, Connecticut officials have launched a national project aimed at developing a new, "performance based" student assessment.

The high-school mathematics and science assessment, expected to be implemented in the 1991-92 school year, got under way last month when state officials received word of a forthcoming $1-million grant from the National Science Foundation and began training teachers from seven states in the new method.

In contrast to conventional tests, the new program will measure student performance on a series of tasks that may take as long as a semester to complete. Students will be asked to work individ-

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State Oversight Likely as Oakland District Is Engulfed in Theft-and-Patronage Scandal

By Nancy Mathis

The Oakland, Calif., police department has opened a telephone hot line to take tips on alleged wrong-doing by school officials, and a county grand jury is awaiting testimony from seven subpoenaed members of the Oakland Board of Education.

The developments are part of an unfolding theft-and-patronage scandal that has brought the system's deep financial and administrative problems into stark relief.

And the picture beginning to emerge has led increasingly to calls for state intervention.

The trouble-plagued district, California's fifth largest, has been without a superintendent since December, with four of the leading candidates for the post having turned it down in recent months.

In the past six months, Oakland police have charged six school employees with theft, and two others—the district's maintenance foreman and its director of state and federal funding—have been indicted on similar charges by the Alameda County grand jury.

The system's budget deficit, placed by conflicting estimates at as high as $20 million, led a grand jury in July to pronounce its financial condition "near insolvency"

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Michael Macor/Oakland Tribune

Lacrecia Brandon joins budget protest.

Planning for Technology: Few Matching Dollars With Foresight

By Peter West

DAYTONA BEACH, FLA.—Michael A. Osborne envisions a day when Mainland Senior High School's reputation as a showcase for educational technology may rival this coastal resort's fame as a site for auto racing and collegiate revelry.

But the Volusia County, Fla., principal knows that the task of converting his more than 30-year-old school into a technological marvel will not be easy.

Already, he and his staff have spent several years on a hard-edged analysis of needs and resources.

This fall, they will set in motion a detailed, five-year plan to replace the school's conventional teaching and management structure with what they describe as a "student centered" electronic learning environment.

As one of five Florida schools designated as "Model Technology Sites," Mainland is lucky. It has a five-year, $1.5 million grant from the state to help it complete the transformation.

In contrast, other schools around the country, experts say, are often operating in the dark when it comes to planning for the technological revolution.

"There is no model," says D. Thomas King, director of the Saturn School of Tomorrow, a special technology-oriented school that opened this month in St. Paul, Minn. "We were going back to square one," he says of the school's planning effort.

Simply updating an average school for the inclusion of microcomputers and other electronic aids, others say, may require far

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How South Carolina carved its 'well-defined niche' for business in school reform.

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Improperly expended funds could now be offset by other, uncharged expenses.

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A conversation with special education's new chief, who happens to be deaf.

IN SUMMARY

'Decriminalizing' Students
Reluctant to have students labeled as "criminals," Dallas public-school officials are trying to clear the records of hundreds of pupils ticketed at school last year for minor discipline problems. **Page 5.**

Private-Practice Teachers?
Legislators and lobbyists in Wisconsin, updating a Minnesota idea, are angling to pass legislation that would specifically allow school districts to hire private teaching firms. **Page 7.**

State Teaching Boards
Advocates of autonomous, teacher-dominated boards to set standards for and control entry into the teaching profession have scored two victories in the states this year. **Page 8.**

Vocational-Bill Maneuvers
Alarmed by a House bill last spring, state groups are gearing up to fight in the Senate for a more favorable vocational-education funding method. **Page 14.**

Counting Homeless Children
The U.S. General Accounting Office estimates that 68,000 children age 16 or younger are homeless on a given night, and an estimated 186,000 more are "precariously housed." **Page 16.**

Victory for the Disabled
A landmark bill approved by the Senate last week would bar discrimination against the handicapped by private, nonsectarian schools, even those not accepting federal aid. **Page 17.**

Returning to China
Despite U.S. State Department warnings, some educational exchange programs with China that were curtailed following the massacre of student activists in June are heading back. **Page 18.**

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ACROSS THE NATION

NATIONAL

Child Care Tops Drug Prevention In Poll of City Children's Needs

Nine out of 10 city officials believe that child care is the most pressing unmet need of children in their cities, according to a new survey of 390 cities by the National League of Cities.

Ranking second was substance-abuse prevention, with 42 percent of the cities listing it as a pressing need in their communities, and third was education-related issues, with 33 percent of cities citing it as an unmet need.

The findings are contained in a 118-page report, "Our Future and Our Only Hope," that offers city officials' views on a host of problems facing children and families, as well as descriptions of their current and projected involvement in addressing these needs.

While many city officials believe that their involvement with children's issues will increase over time, the survey found, 50 percent of all cities surveyed—and 70 percent of the largest cities—cited lack of funding as the major impediment to expanding services.

The report also contains a compendium of "success stories" of programs that address the range of identified problems, including names and addresses of people who can provide further information.

Copies of "Our Future and Our Only Hope" are available for $15 each from the National League of Cities, Office of Publications, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004; or by phoning (202) 626-3000.

■ **Students and school staff members infected with the AIDS virus should be able to go about their normal activities without fear that their condition will become public knowledge**, according to new guidelines published by the National Association of State Boards of Education and the Centers for Disease Control.

Because the virus that causes AIDS is not transmitted by casual contact, states the booklet, "Someone at School Has AIDS," infected students and staff should not be discriminated against or limited in activities solely because they test positive for the virus. Only a serious secondary infection, such as tuberculosis, which is easily transmissible, would be grounds for action, the report says.

Parents and staff members need not notify school officials of an infection unless a physician has determined that a secondary infection exists, the report states. But, once reported, school officials should keep the information confidential.

Several education groups, including the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, have endorsed the guidelines.

STATES

Opinion Allows Districts To Punish Students for Off-Campus Actions

Connecticut districts may discipline students for behavior that occurs off school property, if such actions threaten schools' educational environment, the state's acting attorney general has ruled.

The advisory opinion, which is being distributed throughout the state, was issued in response to requests from the superintendents of New Haven and Bridgeport. Last year, a federal judge blocked New Haven Superintendent of Schools John Dow Jr.'s attempt to expel a student for his alleged involvement in off-campus violence.

The new opinion is similar to policies in effect in at least four states, according to Mark Stapleton, chief of legal affairs for the Connecticut Department of Education. Rulings by California's attorney general and by state courts in Arkansas, New Jersey, and New York have empowered schools to discipline students for off-campus actions, he said.

■ **Three Mississippi businessmen have been charged in an alleged bid-rigging scheme involving the sale of portable classroom buildings to school districts.**

The three men allegedly "divided up" Mississippi and agreed on inflated bids for their respective areas. State officials said the three men allegedly netted more than $800,000 from school districts in Warren, Wayne, Pike, and Lee counties and from Head Start programs in Lee County and the Gulf Coast.

Indicted were Carl W. Stribling, of Stribling Brothers Enterprises in Bovina; Paul Adams Jr., of Adams Home Center in Yazoo City; and Otho W. Brown, of Magnolia State School Products in Columbus.

Each has pleaded innocent to one count of conspiracy to obtain money under false pretenses and five counts of mail fraud.

■ **School boards cannot cite projected long-term enrollment declines as a justification for teacher dismissals**, the Ohio Supreme Court has ruled.

Instead, suspensions can only be motivated by drops in enrollment that occur in the same year as the dismissals, the court said in a 4-to-3 decision.

The Ohio Education Association welcomed the ruling, but the Ohio School Boards Association argued that it would take away flexibility in personnel decisions from school boards.

The court's decision came in response to a suit brought by a high-school teacher who claimed that the South Range Local School District improperly suspended her from her job in 1985. There had been no enrollment decline during the year of her suspension.

■ **The number of teachers and administrators in Wisconsin schools has grown by nearly 20 percent over the past two decades—even as the number of students has fallen by a similar percentage**, according to the Public Expenditure Research Foundation.

A study by the nonpartisan foundation found that the number of professional staff members in the state rose from 46,647 in 1969 to 55,841 this year, while school enrollment decreased from 909,182 to 737,626.

While many of the staffing increases have come as the result of new state-mandated programs, said Robert C. Brunner, president of the organization, "this [study] certainly points out the need for some districts to look at their staffing patterns."

■ **Kentucky students have reached parity with students across the nation in performance on a nationally standardized test**, according to John Brock, state superintendent of public instruction.

In 16 of 19 categories, Kentucky students' average performance equaled or exceeded the 1988 national norm, with only scores in 3rd-grade math and 7th-grade spelling and learning skills falling below the national standard.

The Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills was selected last year to replace the controversial Kentucky Essential Skills Test, which was used from 1985-88.

The KEST was a blend of two types of tests, one part developed in Kentucky, and the other taken from a nationally standardized test.

The legislature scrapped the test after critics charged that the favorable national comparisons reported for KEST were invalid because they were estimated and because they were based on outdated norms.

The C.T.B.S. was redesigned and renormed in 1988. The norms were established based on average scores of a large national sample of students. Comparisons are made against the average scores of those students who are in the same grade and who take the test at the same time of year.

Taking Aim at History

Jose Galvez/Los Angeles Times

Leonardo Morales teaches Ed Ibarra the fine art of archery while Jose Gonzalez points the way during a hands-on history class at Los Angeles' 9th Street School late last month. The class was taught by recently arrived immigrants.

DISTRICTS

Cleveland Teachers Accept Voluntary Career-Ladder Plan

The Cleveland school district will begin phasing in a voluntary career-ladder plan for teachers this fall, one year after a proposed mandatory ladder led to a teachers' strike.

The teachers' union and the district agreed on the new ladder after more than a year of negotiations, according to Timothy O. Giles, district chief of supportive services.

The district had proposed spending $2.5 million to begin the program, but the school board last month ordered Superintendent of Schools Alfred A. Tutela to find an extra $7.5 million to implement the program fully.

Under the plan, teachers can earn extra money based on their progress in meeting goals set forth during meetings with their principals at the beginning of the school year.

"It allows people to make some decisions about how they can contribute to improving the educational-delivery system," Mr. Giles said. "They will have some input into how [progress] will be measured, and then we'll compensate them for it."

The four-rung career ladder will provide experienced teachers with the opportunity to earn up to $58,000 a year, while top-paid teachers who choose not to participate in the ladder will be paid $44,600.

■ **Police in Fort Worth, Tex., last week arrested a 12-year-old boy in connection with the stabbing death of a 24-year-old teacher found dead during her first day at work.**

News accounts, which described the youth as being emotionally disturbed, quoted police sources as saying the boy may have killed teacher Jana Simpson after she confronted him on the grounds of Glen Park Elementary School.

Ms. Simpson, her body stabbed numerous times and her spinal cord severed, was found dead Aug. 28 outside a portable classroom building behind the school.

The youth, described as being half the size of the 5-foot, 9-inch, athletically built teacher, formerly attended the elementary school. He was arrested at the middle school he now attends, located five blocks away.

Reports said that police initially were searching for the boy as a potential witness, but that during questioning, he gave them statements about the murder. As of late last week, the youth had not been formally charged in the crime.

■ **A small Texas school district near the Dallas-Fort Worth airport has granted American Airlines a 15-year, $50-million property-tax abatement** in exchange for construction of a maintenance facility that eventually will employ 4,500 workers.

In return for the abatement, Northwest Independent School District will receive over four years a $1.6 million gift from H. Ross Perot Jr., a spokesman for the district said.

Mr. Perot, son of the Texas billionaire, is the project's developer. He also pledged to give the district, which enrolls 3,000 students, a 15-acre site for a new elementary school and to pay for a study into academic improvements in the school district.

■ **Steadily increasing numbers of Hispanic and Asian students enrolling in the Providence, R.I., public schools have rendered the district's 22-year-old desegregation plan obsolete**, according to a new report commissioned by Joseph Almagno, the state superintendent.

Thirteen of the district's 33 schools no longer meet state desegregation guidelines, which require the enrollment of minorities in individual schools to fall within 15 percentage points of the districtwide minority enrollment.

The report recommends that the superintendent begin devising a new plan, with broad community consultation, for implementation by September 1991.

■ **A group of Asian high-school students in Philadelphia has charged that anti-Asian biases pervade that city's public-school system.**

"School officials see Asian students as being whiz kids," Somara Tav, a high-school sophomore, told the Philadelphia school board during a meeting late last month. "We just wanted to point out that we do have problems in school, and one of our major problems is racism."

Mr. Tav and another student, Gina Kim, interviewed fellow Asian students for a local community group, Asian-Americans United. They said students told them, for example, of teachers who used the term "chink" and other racial slurs when referring to Asian students.

They asked the school district to address the problem by hiring more Asian teachers and expanding lessons on the history and cultures of Asian nations.

District officials pledged to investigate the students' allegations.

Who's Got the Keys?

Students in the rural Delta (Mo.) R-5 School District made it through the first day of school just fine. They just never made it to the second day.

Instead, they were treated to an unscheduled school holiday when vandals broke into a garage over the weekend and scattered keys to the district's six school buses throughout the building.

Come Monday morning, bus drivers had just 10 minutes to locate the keys and get the buses on their routes. "We were able to get four of the six buses going," Gene Garrison, the district's superintendent, says, "but when you're in a rural district, that's just not enough." School had to be cancelled.

The keys were kept in the bus ignitions, and the transportation director had a spare set tucked away in what he thought was a safe place. "Evidently," Mr. Garrison notes, "this was not the case."

"The unexpected can happen any time," Mr. Garrison says knowingly. "But this was sort of an odd thing to be told on the morning of the second day of school."

At first glance, it looks like a prank committed by students anxious to postpone the start of the school year. But, the superintendent says, students are not under suspicion for this one. "Typically, when kids do something like this, they have to brag about it," Mr. Garrison explains. In this case, not even the kids seem to know who is responsible.

Regardless of who the culprits are, the district has taken steps to prevent a repeat performance. A third set of keys has been made and is being kept "*completely* away from the garage area—under three locks," Mr. Garrison says. Vandals might still be able to find the second set of keys, he notes, "but they would have to go way, way, way out of their way to get to the third set." —J.W.

DIMENSIONS

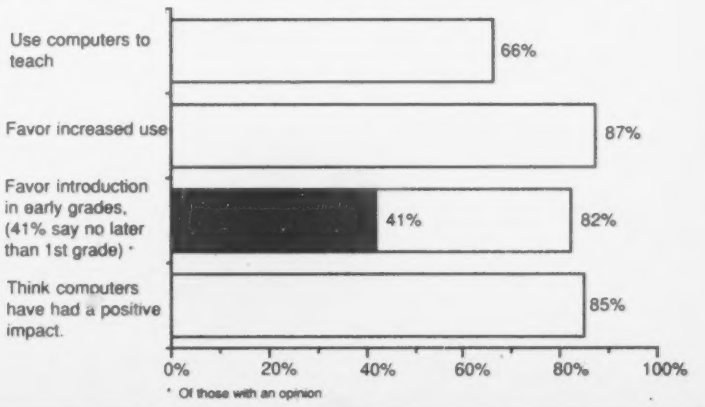
Computers in the Classroom

Teachers have warmly welcomed computers into their classrooms, and view them as a valuable tool in fighting high dropout rates and other nagging problems, a new study reports.

Sixty-six percent of 1,100 randomly chosen teachers in a nationwide telephone survey conducted for International Business Machines Corporation said they already use computers, and 87 percent favor increased use. The survey, conducted this summer by the market-research firm the Wirthlin Group, also found that 82 percent of those who had an opinion favor introducing computers in the early grades, and 41 percent said children should begin becoming "computer literate" no later than 1st grade.

By large margins, teachers also said computers can help reduce dropout rates, decrease illiteracy, cut down on absenteeism and discipline problems, and effectively reach students with messages about substance abuse and sexuality.

Teachers also said computers help them be more creative, spend more time on one-to-one instruction, and better diagnose a student's strengths and weaknesses.



PEOPLE

■ **Mary Hatwood Futrell**, past president of the National Education Association, has joined George Washington University as a senior fellow and associate director of the George Washington Center for the Study of Education and National Development.

Ms. Futrell, who was president of the N.E.A. for six years, also will teach education courses. The Washington, D.C.-based center conducts research and develops policy initiatives on major national educational issues.

Ms. Futrell received a master's degree in secondary education from George Washington in 1968. In 1987, the university awarded her an honorary doctorate.

■ The county "teacher of the year" in Moultrie, Ga., will not be rehired even though a jury last month acquitted her on charges of manufacturing and possessing marijuana.

Vicki Sherling, a chemistry teacher at Colquitt County High School, was arrested last spring and accused of helping her husband grow marijuana in their backyard greenhouse.

The Colquitt County Board of Education did not base its decision on whether Ms. Sherling had been found guilty or innocent, said Superintendent of Schools Billy Mock. Rather, he explained, "she was relieved of her teaching requirements in compliance with the guideline on fair dismissal, which specifies immorality."

Ms. Sherling has filed an appeal with the state board of education, and a hearing is set for Sept. 19.

■ A well-regarded Florida high-school teacher was arrested last month and charged with assuming the identity of a dead man.

Robert Hutchinson, an English teacher at Lincoln Park Academy in Fort Pierce, Fla., is really Ralph P. Stregles, according to the state's attorney's office, which conducted an investigation into Mr. Stregles' past and notified the school of its findings last June.

Mr. Stregles came to the St. Lucie County School District two and a half years ago, said Mark Molina, a county information officer. "He went through our normal screening process and presented what were thought to be real bachelor's, master's, and doctoral-degree transcripts," Mr. Molina said.

Mr. Stregles, who never graduated from college and who reportedly earned a doctorate using false credentials, has been suspended from his teaching job pending resolution of the case. He is believed to have been using borrowed identities for more than 20 years.

UPDATE

■ **At least two test schools for Whittle Communications' "Channel One" news program for students have decided not to continue with the program.**

The Cincinnati Board of Education voted late last month not to continue participating in the 12-minute news show for junior and senior high schools. Whittle tested the program for seven weeks earlier this year at Withrow High School in Cincinnati and at five other schools across the country.

Many education groups have objected to "Channel One" because it includes two minutes of advertising each day. Cincinnati officials said that they were concerned about the commercials, and that they were not convinced students learned a great deal from the show. *(See Education Week, Sept. 5, 1989).*

Another test school, Gahr High School, in Cerritos, Calif., will not continue with "Channel One" because California state school officials have threatened to withhold funds from any district that shows commercials to students.

Planning for Technology: Few Schools Are Matching Dollars With Foresight

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more forethought than is currently standard.

"Schools will spend thousands of dollars to acquire sophisticated software and equipment, but they don't seem to have a plan for how to use it effectively," observes John Schlotfeldt, a former secondary-school principal who is now president of Washington State's Olympia Computing Company.

At Mainland, planning will be comprehensive—from training personnel to checking for adequate lighting and electrical outlets.

As one of Florida's five model sites, the school must make the information it gleans "portable," or readily adaptable to other schools.

"We've got to be able to answer questions like, 'How do you deal with the number of wall sockets?' and 'How do you pay for this?' " says Eric J. Smith, director of management and planning for the Volusia County school system.

"We're writing the book on how to do this," he adds. "And everything's a new chapter."

'Disappointing Pattern'

Mainland's new vision of itself began long before the installation of hardware and software. It was prefaced by years of planning activities that brought together technology experts, teachers, parents, local businesses, and other members of the community.

"We wanted to create a dream," Principal Osborne recalls, adding: "I'd hate to think of how many hours we spent with the steering committee."

But the experience at Mainland runs counter to what one national study calls the "diverse and frankly disappointing pattern of planning efforts" among some of the nation's larger school districts.

Findings from the survey of 773 districts enrolling 10,000 or more students show that "[t]echnology planning is clearly a weak area of endeavor," the study says.

That report, "Thinking About Technology in Schools: A 1988 Snapshot," was published in March by the National School Boards Association's Institute for the Transfer of Technology to Education and the Control Data Corporation.

Although 607 of the superintendents polled said their district had a written plan for the inclusion of technology and would be willing to share it, only 213 actually submitted documents for review.

Plans ranged in size from "a page or two to a book or two in length," the report says, but "most . . . did not have a comprehensive flavor."

"Districtwide planning for technology, of the style of planning in large businesses, occurs only in some districts," the report concludes.

Computer Plans Favored

In discussing the report's findings, James A. Mecklenburger, director of the N.S.B.A. institute, says plans tended to be drafted in reaction to outside pressures to automate instruction, not out of a genuine desire to apply technology to educational challenges.

Few of the plans, he says, weighed the relative benefits of the various instructional technologies beyond the computer, such as cable television, videodisks, satellite- and other distance-learning technologies.

"When you ask people for technology plans, they tend to have been put together ad hoc. They tend to be limited in scope," he says. "We asked for technology plans; we tended to get computer documents."

And few, if any, of the plans, Mr. Mecklenburger indicated, met the standards of comprehensiveness and long-term flexibility that should be their hallmarks.

Seldom were the documents, in Mr. Mecklenburger's words, "a statement of the kinds of ways in which a school district was going to take advantage of the technology to satisfy the educational goals it set for itself."

Some Efforts Better

In some parts of the country, however, school officials are developing, with the help of private consultants, technology firms, and groups of teachers and parents, long-range proposals for technology use.

For example:

- The Washington State education department, in conjunction with Apple Computer Inc., held an education-technology institute last month to address the development of technology plans.

Forty school districts applied to participate, but the field of participants eventually was narrowed to 20, based on a number of criteria, including their "degree of readiness" to enter the planning process.

- The 65,000-student Anne Arundel County, Md., school system contracted with the International Business Machines Corporation when it decided to upgrade its aging administrative computer system and integrate technology more broadly into its instructional program.

With I.B.M.'s help, the district completed a lengthy and in-depth survey of adminstrators, teachers, principals, secretaries, and other employees to determine what functions a new system should be able to perform.

The plan that eventually resulted covered two volumes and touched on such issues as telecommunications and distance learning.

- The Virginia Board of Education has adopted a six-year technology plan that encompasses planning for such technologies as video, microcomputers, and distance learning by satellite.

The plan, drafted by a 17-member committee of elementary, secondary, community-college and university educators, as well as business leaders, stressed the need to "prepare students for life in the 21st century."

Expanding Capabilities

But lack of forethought—not only in purchasing, but in implementation—continues to be the norm, according to consultants in the field.

Often, they say, problems can arise when educators who are unfamiliar and untrained in the use of the equipment refuse to relinquish their established patterns of operations.

For example, says the Washington State consultant, a school today can put in place a computerized system for filing student records that gives guidance counselors access to those files and has passwords that allow them to change final grades.

But achieving the benefits of such access, he adds, would depend not only on a school system's understanding of the capability and its safeguards, but also its employees' willingness to accept and learn the technology.

A computerized system also multiplies the potential for abuse and error, Mr. Schlotfeldt warns. "That's just one example of how people jump into high tech without the necessary planning," he says.

Leap Now or Later?

But even districts that conscientiously look toward the future can get caught in the rush to buy the latest technologies, others warn.

"The cost keeps coming down as new products enter the marketplace, and there's always the issue of whether or not we should leap in now or leap in the future," explains Richard A. Pollak, president of Emerging Technology Consultants, a Minneapolis firm.

The bewildering array of similar products also can confuse first-time and even experienced buyers, he adds.

"It's something new, and there's always something else new in the area," says Mr. Pollak, adding that "the industry and its non-standardization" adds to the confusion.

In-house rivalries between local "computer experts" and those wanting to improve system capabilities require the kind of third-party arbitration firms like his provide, the consultant maintains.

"There's a lot of expertise in the schools themselves and that causes conflict," he says.

Fighting 'Technophobia'

But the pressure to come up with technological solutions to educational problems is mounting, experts say, and with it the need for comprehensive planning grows.

This summer, for example, a report by the National Education Association's special committee on educational technology urged school districts to set as a goal placing microcomputers and appropriate software on the desk of every teacher by 1991.

That report echoes a sentiment shared by many technologically oriented educators, who say that because teachers are the staff members most directly affected by technological change, they must be consulted—and often consoled—as plans are developed.

"There is still a great deal of anxiety expressed by educators about the integration of technology in the school environment," the N.E.A. report says. "Technophobia is a real and flourishing malady."

Many existing plans do take the changing role of the teacher into account.

In the development of St. Paul's Saturn School, for instance, the local teachers' union was among the first groups consulted on the project. Says Mr. King: "We were asking for new behaviors from teachers, so, first and foremost, we felt that the teacher had to have input."

At Mainland Senior High School here, Mr. Osborne says, teachers have been constantly involved in the planning process. One of the plan's chief feature will be the provision of a personal microcomputer for each teacher, he reports. "It's not new to them to ask questions," the principal says.

'Retrofitting' Older Schools

But remodeling older schools such as Mainland so they can accommodate the new technologies presents a separate set of problems, experts point out.

Older school buildings were not designed for such electronic necessities as computer cooling systems and advanced wiring, they say. And, according to some studies, more than half of the schools in use today were built in the 1950's and 1960's.

Gary L. Carnow, director of the Alhambra (Calif.) Unified School District, says that "the whole issue of 'retrofitting' a school for the 1990's involves looking at where your technology is in your school, how it may or may not all hook together."

In the Alhambra district, such a "retrofitting" has been undertaken at the Emory Park Elementary School, a structure built in the 1930's.

As part of the project, which was paid for by the California Model Technology Program, computer stations were established in the hallways, a networked computer lab was assembled, a basement technology center was built, and other modifications were made.

Each step of the program required some modification of the school and, in some cases, asbestos was disturbed during the remodeling.

"In classrooms of the 1930's, you're lucky if you have one electrical outlet in a room," Mr. Carnow observes. "One of the problems we faced at Emory Park was just getting the blueprints for the school."

Physical barriers to implementation are not confined to older schools, however. According to Mr. King, the planning committee for the Saturn School of Tomorrow had to contend with such mundane matters as whether there was appropriate lighting in the rooms where computer screens would be in use.

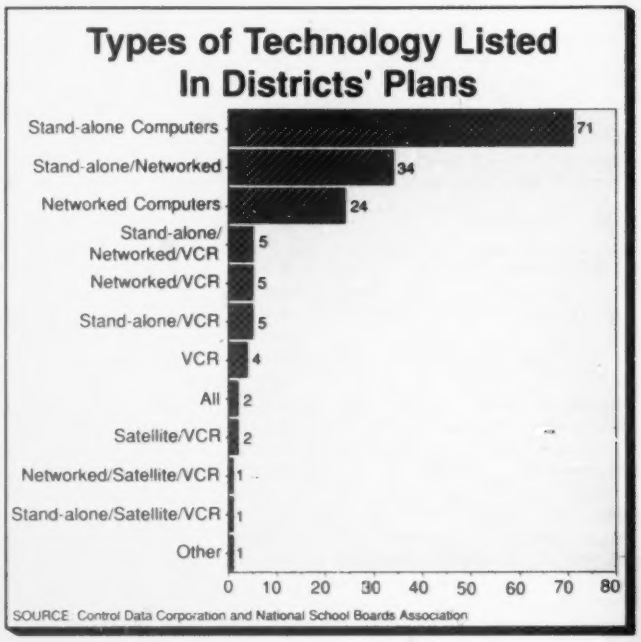
'An Ongoing Process'

The goal of the Volusia County, Fla., project is to devise solutions adaptable to other schools for many of these structural, personnel, and instructional questions that arise when technological capacities are upgraded.

But according to Eric Smith, the director of management and planning, the process of answering those questions has turned planning itself "into an ongoing process" at Mainland High.

And, though he still sees bridging the physical barriers presented by his older building as a primary concern, Mr. Smith can agree with the director of Minnesota's new Saturn School that planning in every area is a challenge with few existing guideposts.

"It's very much a 'seat of the pants,' barnstorming kind of thing," Saturn's Mr. King says.



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